

SATAN DEPARTING, ANGELS MINISTERING

NO. 2326

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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“And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.”
Luke 4:13

“Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him.”
Matthew 4:11

BELOVED friends, we have very much to learn from our Lord's temptation. He was tempted in all points, like as we are. If you will study the temptation of Christ, you will not be ignorant of Satan's devices. If you see how He worsted the enemy, you will learn what weapons to use against your great adversary. If you see how our Lord conquers throughout the whole battle, you will learn that, as you keep close to Him, you will be more than conqueror through Him that loved you.

From our Lord's temptation we learn, especially, to pray, “Lead us not into temptation.” Let us never mistake the meaning of that petition. We are to pray that we may not be tempted, for we are poor flesh and blood, and very frail, and it is for us to cry to God, “Lead us not into temptation.” But we also learn a great deal from the close of our Lord's great threefold trial. We find Him afterwards peaceful—ministered unto by angels—and rejoicing.

That should teach us to pray, “But if we must be tempted, deliver us from the evil,” or as some render it, and very correctly, too, “Deliver us from the evil one.” First, we pray that we may not be tempted at all, and then, as a supplement to that prayer, yielding the whole matter to divine wisdom, “If it be needful for our manhood, for our growth in grace, for the verification of our graces, and for God's glory, that we should be tempted, Lord, deliver us from the evil, and especially deliver us from the impersonation of evil, the evil one!”

With that as an introduction, for a short time tonight let me call upon you to notice in our text, first, *the devil leaving the tempted One*—“Then the devil left him.” Secondly, we shall keep to Matthew's Gospel and notice *the angels ministering to the tempted One* after the fallen angel had left Him. And then, thirdly, *the limitation of the rest which we may expect*—the limitation of the time in which Satan will be gone—for Luke puts it, “When the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him *for a season*,” or as some put it, “until a fit opportunity,” when he would again return, and our great Lord and Master would once more be tried by his wicked wiles.

I. First, we have as the subject for our happy consideration, THE DEVIL LEAVING THE TEMPTED ONE.

When did the devil leave our Lord? *When he had finished the temptation.* It must have been a great relief to our divine Master when Satan left Him. The very air must have been purer and fitter to be breathed. His soul must have felt a great relief when the evil spirit had gone away—but he went not, we are told, until he had finished all the temptation.

So Luke puts it—“When the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.” Satan will not go till he has shot the last arrow from his quiver. Such is his malice that as long as he can tempt, he will tempt. His will desires our total destruction, but his power is not equal to his will. God does not give him power such as he would like to possess—there is always a limit set to his assaults.

When Satan has tempted you throughout and ended all his temptation, then he will leave you. You have not yet undergone all forms of temptation, so you may not expect absolutely and altogether to be left by the arch-enemy. It may be a long time, when you are suffering from his attacks, before he will hold his hand, for he will try all that he possibly can to lead you into evil and to destroy the grace that is in you.

Still, he does come to an end with his temptations sooner than he desires, for as God has said to the mighty sea, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed”—so says He to the devil. When He permitted Satan to try the graces of Job and to prove his sincerity, He let him go just so far, but no farther. And when he asked for a further stretch of power, still there was a limit.

There is always a limit to Satan’s power and when he reaches that point, he will be pulled up short—he can do no more. You are never so in the hand of Satan as to be out of the hand of God. You are never so tempted, if you are a believer, that there is not a way of escape for you. God permits you to be tried for many reasons which, perhaps, you could not altogether understand, but which His infinite wisdom understands for you.

But He will not suffer the rod of the wicked to rest upon the lot of the righteous. It may fall there, but it shall not rest there. The Lord may let you be put into the fire, but the fire shall be heated no hotter than you are able to bear. “When the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him.”

Satan did not depart from Christ, however, until *he had also failed in every temptation*. When the Lord had foiled him at every point—had met every temptation with a text of Holy Scripture and had proved His own determination to hold fast His integrity and not let it go—it was not till then that the enemy departed.

Oh, brothers and sisters, if you can hold out, if you can stand against this and then against that, if you are proof against frowns and proof against flatteries, if you are proof against prosperity and proof against adversity, if you are proof against sly insinuations and open attacks—when you have won the day, as by God’s grace you will do, even as your Master did—then the enemy will depart from you! “Well,” says one, “I wish that he would depart from me, for I have been sorely troubled by him,” to which I say most heartily, “Amen.”

Let us think, for a minute or two, about when Satan will depart from the child of God, as he did from the great Son of God.

I have no doubt that he will do that when he finds that it is necessary for him to be somewhere else. Satan is not everywhere and cannot be, for he is not divine. He is not omnipresent, but as one has said, although he is not everywhere present, it would be hard to say where he is not, for he moves so swiftly, he is such an agile spirit, that he seems to be here and there and everywhere.

And where he is not in person, he is represented by that vast host—the legions of fallen spirits who are under his control. And even where they are not, he carries out his evil devices so that he leaves the leaven to work, the evil seeds to grow, when he himself has gone elsewhere. Yet it is, probably, not many times in one’s life that any man is actually called into conflict with Satan himself personally. There are too many of us now for him to give all his time and strength to one—he has to be somewhere else.

Oh, I long to be the means of multiplying the number of God’s people by the preaching of the Word, that the Gospel of the grace of God may fly abroad and bring in myriads—that the devil may have more to do and therefore not be able to give so much of his furious attention, as he does in one direction and another, to the children of God.

He also leaves God’s people very quickly when he sees that they are sustained by superior grace. He hopes to catch them when grace is at a low ebb. If he can come upon them when faith is very weak, when hope’s eyes are dim, when love has grown cold—then he thinks that he will make an easy capture. But when we are filled with the Spirit as the Master was, (God grant that we may be!) he looks us up and down, and he presently sheers off. Like an old pirate, who hangs about on the lookout for merchant

vessels, but if he meets with ships that have plenty of guns on board and hardy hands to give him a warm reception, he goes after some other craft not quite so well able to resist his assaults.

Oh, brothers and sisters, be not merely Christians, only barely Christians, with just enough grace to let you see your imperfections, but pray to God to give you mighty grace, that you may “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,” so that, after the devil has tested you, and found that the Lord is with you, that God dwells in you, then you may expect that, as it was with your Master, so it will be with you—Satan will leave you.

Sometimes I think, however, that Satan personally leaves us, because he knows that not to be tempted is, to some men, a greater danger than to be tempted. “Oh!” say you, “how can that be?” Brothers, sisters, do you know nothing of carnal security, of being left, as you think, to grow in grace and to be very calm, very happy, and as you hope, very useful and to find beneath you a sea of glass with not a ripple on the wave?

“Yes,” say you, “I do know that experience and I have been thankful for it.” Have you never found creeping over you, at the same time, the idea that you are somebody, that you are getting wonderfully experienced, that you are an eminent child of God, rich and increased in goods, and have you not said, like David, “I shall never be moved”?

Possibly you have looked askance on some of your friends, who have been trembling and timid, and crying to God from day to day to keep them. You have been Sir Mighty—you have been Lord Great-One and everybody must bow down before you. Ah, yes, you have now fallen into a worse condition than even those are in who are tempted of Satan!

A calm in the tropics is more to be dreaded than a tempest. In such a calm everything gets to be still and stagnant, the ship scarcely moves. It is like a painted ship on a painted sea and it gets to be in something like the state described by Coleridge’s *Ancient Mariner*,—

*“The very deep did rot:
Alas, that ever this should be!
And slimy things with legs did crawl
Over the slimy sea.”*

“Oh!” say you, “that is horrible.” Yes, and that is the tendency of a soul that is at peace with itself and is not emptied from vessel to vessel. I fear that is often the case with those who believe themselves to be supernaturally holy. A curious fact can be proven by abundant evidence, namely, that the boast of human perfection is closely followed by obscenity and licentiousness.

The most unclean sects that have ever defaced the page of history have been founded by those who had the notion that they were beyond temptation, that they had ceased to sin, and never could transgress again. “Ah!” says Satan, “this notion does my work a great deal better than tempting a man. When I tempt him, then he stands up to resist me. He has his eyes open, he grasps his sword, and puts on his helmet, he cries to God, “Lord, help me!” And he watches night and day—and the more tempted he is—the more he looks to God for strength.

“But if I leave him quite alone and he goes to sleep, well then he is not in the battle. And if he begins to feel quite secure, then I can steal in upon him unawares and make a speedy end of him.” This is one reason why Satan leaves some men untempted. A roaring devil is better than a sleeping devil—and there is no temptation much worse than that of never being tempted at all.

Again, I doubt not that Satan leaves us—nay, I know that he does—when the Lord says to him what He said in the wilderness, “Get thee hence, Satan.” And He does say that when He sees one of His poor children dragged about, tortured, wounded, bleeding. He says, “Get thee hence, Satan. I permit you to fetch in My stray sheep, but not to worry them to death. Get thee hence, Satan.” The old hell-dog knows his Master and he flies at once.

This voice of God will come when the Lord sees that we cast ourselves wholly upon Him. In my brother's prayer he suggested to us, if you remember, that in casting our burden upon the Lord we might not be able to get rid of it. The way was to cast ourselves and our burden both upon the Lord. The best way of all is to get rid of the burden entirely, to cast yourself, but without your burden, upon the Lord.

Let me remind you of a story that I once told you, of a gentleman who, riding along in his gig, saw a packman carrying a heavy pack, and asked him if he would like a ride. "Yes, and thank you, sir." But he kept his pack on his back while riding. "Oh!" said the friend, "why do you not take your pack off and put it down in front?" "Why, sir," he said, "it is so kind of you to give me a ride that I do not like to impose upon your good nature, and I thought that I would carry the pack myself!" "Well," said the other, "but you see, it makes no difference to me whether you carry it or do not carry it—I have to carry you and your pack—so you had better unstrap it and put it down in front."

So, friend, when you cast your burden upon God, unstrap it. Why should you bear it yourself when God is prepared to bear it? Beloved, there are times when we forget that, but when we can come and absolutely yield ourselves right up, saying, "Lord, here I am, tempted, and poor, and weak. But I come and rest in You. I know not what to ask at Your hands, but Your servant has said, 'Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.' I lie at your feet, my Lord. Here I am, here would I be. Do with me as seems good in Your sight—only deal in tender mercy with Your servant." Then will the Lord rebuke the enemy. The waves of the sea shall be still and there shall be a great calm.

So much for the devil leaving the tempted one. He does so, he *must do so*, when God commands it.

II. But now, secondly, let us think of THE ANGELS MINISTERING TO THE TEMPTED ONE.

The angels came and ministered to our Lord after Satan was gone. Notice that they did not come while our Lord was in the battle. Why not? Why, because it was needful that He should tread the winepress alone, and because it was more glorious for Him that of the people there should be none with Him!

Had there been any angels there to help Him in the duel with the adversary, they might have shared the honor of the victory, but they must stay away till the fight is over, and when the foe is gone, then the angels come. It has been noted that it does not say that the angels came very often and ministered to Jesus, as much as to make us think that they were always near, that they hovered within earshot, watching, and ready to interpose if they might. They were a bodyguard round about our Lord, even as they are today about His people, for "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" But the moment that the fight was over, then the angels came and ministered to Christ. Why was that?

I suppose, first, because, as man, *He was especially exhausted*. He was hungry, we are told, and that proves exhaustion. But besides that, the strain of forty days' temptation must have been immense. Men can bear up under a strain, but when it is eased, then they fall. Elijah can do marvels, he can strike the priests of Baal and behave like a hero, but after it is all over, Elijah fails. As man, our Lord was subject to the sinless infirmities of our flesh, and it was needful that angels should come and minister to Him, even as the angel did in the garden, after the agony and bloody sweat.

But it was also because, being man, *He was to partake of the ministry which God had allotted to man*. He has appointed angels to watch over His own people, and inasmuch as Jesus is our Brother, as the children were partakers of the ministry of angels, He Himself also took part with the same that He might show how He took our weakness upon Him, and therefore needed and received that succor which the Father has promised to all His children.

Was it not, again, because *He was so beloved of the angels and they were so loyal to Him*? They must have been amazed when they saw Him born on earth and living here in poverty. And when they saw Him tempted of the enemy, they must have loathed the adversary. How could Satan be permitted to come so near their pure and holy Master? I think that Milton could have pictured this scene and that he would have drawn every seraph there as longing to let his falchion of flame find a scabbard in the heart

of the foul fiend that dared to come so near to the Prince of purity. But they must not interfere, yet, as soon as they might, then they joyfully came and ministered unto Him.

And does it not also go to show that *His was a nature very sensitive to the angelic touch*? You and I are coarse, hard-hearted.

*“Myriads of spirits throng the air:
They are about us now.”*

Women are to cover their heads in worship “because of the angels.” There are many acts of decorum in holy worship that are to be kept up “because of the angels.” They are innumerable, they are sent to minister to us, but we are not sentient of them—often we do not perceive them. But Jesus was all tenderness and sensitiveness—and He knew that the angels were there, so it was easy for them to come and minister to Him.

What they did in ministering to Him, we cannot tell. I should certainly think that they sustained His bodily nature, for He hungered and they readily brought to Him food. But they also sustained His mental and His spiritual nature with words of comfort. The sight of them reminded Him of His Father’s house, reminded Him of the glory which He had laid aside. The sight of them proved that the Father did not forget Him. He had sent the household troops of heaven to succor and support Him.

The sight of them must have made Him anticipate the day of which the poet sings,—

*“They brought His chariot from above,
To bear Him to His throne;
Clapp’d their triumphant wings, and cried,
‘The glorious work is done.’”*

Well now, brethren, if we are tempted, shall we have any angels to succor us? Well, we shall have the equivalent of angels, certainly. Oftentimes, after a temptation, God sends His human messengers. Many of you can tell how, when you have been hearing the Word after a bad time of temptation, the Gospel message has been wonderfully sweet to you.

You have sat in your pew and said, “God sent that sermon on purpose for me.” Or if you have not had a sermon, you have read the Bible and the words have seemed to burn and glow on the page, and you have warmed your soul by their heat. Has it not been so with you often? Are not all the holy things more sweet after trial than they were before? Have you not found them so?

I bear my willing witness that never does Christ seem so precious, never do the promises seem so rich and rare, never does evangelical doctrine cling so closely to my heart, and my heart to it, as after a time of painful trial, when I have been laid aside from holy service and racked with anguish. Oh, then the angels come and minister to us, in the form of men who preach the Word, or in the form of the living page of God’s written Word!

I have noticed, too, that God sometimes cheers His tempted people with clear sunshine after rain, by some very gracious providences. Something happens that they could not have looked for—so pleasant, so altogether helpful—that they have had to burst into singing, though just before they had been sighing. The cage door was set wide open and God’s bird has had such a flight and sung so sweetly, as it mounted up to heaven-gate, that the soul seemed transformed into a holy lark in its ascending music. Have you not found the Lord very gracious to you after some severe trial or some strong temptation? I believe that this will be the testimony of many experienced Christians.

And as there come these choice providences, so, I do not doubt, there do come actual angels ministering to us, though we are unaware of their presence. They can suggest holy thoughts, I doubt not, to bring us comfort. But above the angels, far superior to angelic help, is the Holy Ghost the Comforter. How sweetly can He close up every wound and make it even sing as it heals! He makes the bones that

God had broken to rejoice and fills us with a deeper experience of delight than we have ever known before.

Well now, I suppose that some of you here tonight are in this condition—that Satan has left you and angels are ministering to you. If so, you are very happy. Bless your God for it. There is a great calm. Thank God for the calm after the storm. I hope, my brother, that you are the stronger for what you have endured, and that the conflict has matured you, and prepared you for something better.

Now, what did our Lord do after the devil had left Him and the angels had come to minister to Him? Did He go home and stop there and begin to sing of His delightful experiences? No, we find Him preaching directly afterwards, full of the Spirit of God. He went everywhere, proclaiming the kingdom of God. He was found in the synagogue or on the hillside. Just in proportion as the Spirit of God had enabled Him to overcome the enemy, we find Him going forth to spend that strength in the service of His Lord.

O tempted one, have you a respite? Spend that respite for Him who gave it to you. Is it calm now, after a storm? Go now, and sow your fields with the good seed. Have you wiped your eye and is the salt tear gone? Go you sing a Psalm, then—sing unto your Well-beloved—and go you down into His vineyard, and take the foxes, and prune the vines, and dig about them—and do necessary work for Him who has done so much for you.

List. You have been set free. There are many under bondage to Satan—not as you are, fighting against him—but his willing slaves. Oh, come, my brother—your God has set you free—go after them! Go after the fallen woman and the drunken man. Go, seek and find the most debauched, the most depraved. Specially look after any of your own house who have played the prodigal.

*“Oh, come, let us go and find them!
In the paths of death they roam:
At the close of the day ’twill be sweet to say,
‘I have brought some lost one home;’”*

and it will be right to say it, if the Lord has dealt so well with you.

III. Now, I have to close by reminding you of the third point, which is a searching truth, namely, THE LIMITATION OF OUR REST. Satan left Christ “for a season,” or until a fit occasion.

Did the devil assail our Lord again? I am not sure that he personally did, but he did so in many ways by others. I notice that, before long, he tried to entangle Him in His speech. That is a very easy thing to do with us. Somebody tonight can take up something that I have said, twist it from its connection, and make it sound and seem totally different from what was meant by it.

You know how the Herodians, the Sadducees, and the Pharisees did this with our Lord—they tried to entangle Him in His speech. In all of that, Satan led them on. Satan also actively opposed Christ’s ministry and Christ opposed Satan—but Jesus won the day, for He saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

A more artful plan still was that by which the devil’s servants, the demons that were cast out of possessed persons, called Jesus the Son of God. He rebuked them because He did not want any testimony from them. No doubt the devil thought it a very cunning thing to praise the Savior, because then the Savior’s friends would begin to be suspicious of Him if He was praised by the devil.

This was a deep trick, but the Master made him hold his peace. You remember how He said on one occasion, “Hold thy peace, and come out of him”? It was something like this, “Down dog! Come out!” Christ is never very polite with Satan—a few words and very strong ones are all that are necessary for this arch-prince of wickedness.

Satan tempted our Lord through Peter. That is a plan that he has often tried with us, setting a friend of ours to do his dirty work. Peter took his Lord and rebuked Him, when He spoke about being spit upon and put to death. And then the Lord said, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” He could see the devil using

Peter's tenderness to try to take Him off from His self-sacrifice. Oh, how often has Satan tempted us that way, entangling us in our speech, opposing us in our work, praising us out of wicked motives to try to deceive us, and then setting up some friend to try to take us off from holy self-denial!

There were also occasional heart-sinkings in our Lord. Thus we read in John 12:27, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour?" He seems to have been very heavy in heart at that time. But the deepest soul-sinking was when, in the garden, His soul was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."

Satan had a hand in that sore trial, for the Lord had said, "The prince of this world cometh," and He said to those who came to arrest Him, "This is your hour and the power of darkness." It was a dreadful season. Our Lord's ministry began and ended with a fierce onslaught from Satan. He left Him after the temptation, but only for a season.

Well now, dear friends, if we have peace and quietness tonight, and are not tempted, do not let us become self-secure. The devil will come to us again at a fit opportunity. And when will that be? There are a great many fit opportunities with you and with me. One is, *when we have nothing to do*. You know Dr. Watts' lines,—

*"Satan finds some mischief still,
For idle hands to do."*

He will come and attack us *when we are alone*. I mean, when we are sad and lonely, and are sitting still, and moping by ourselves.

But Satan also finds a very fit occasion *when we are in company*, especially when it is very mixed company—a company of persons, perhaps, who are superior to ourselves in education and in station—but who do not fear God. We may easily be overawed and led astray by them. Satan will come then.

I have known him frequently come and find an occasion against the children of God *when we are sick and ill*, the old coward! He knows that we would not mind him when we are in good health, but sometimes when we are down in the dumps through sickness and pain—then it is that he begins to tempt us to despair.

So will he do with us *when we are very poor*. When a man has had a great loss in business, down comes Satan and insinuates, "Is *this* how God treats His children? God's people are no better off than other people."

Then, *if we are getting on in the world*, he turns it the other way, and he says, "Doth Job fear God for nought? He gets on by his religion." You cannot please the devil and you need not want to please him. He can make a temptation for you out of anything.

I am going to say something that will surprise you. One time of great temptation is *when we are very spiritual*. As to myself, I have never been in such supreme danger as when I have led some holy meeting with sacred fervor and have felt carried away with delight in God. You know that it is easy to be on the Mount of Transfiguration and then to meet Satan at the foot, as our Lord did when He came down from that hill.

Another time of temptation is *when we have already done wrong*. "Now he begins to slip," says Satan. "I saw him trip. Now I will have him down." Oh, for speedy repentance and an earnest flight to Christ whenever there has been a grave fault, ay, and before the grave fault comes, that we may be preserved from falling!

And Satan finds a good occasion for tempting us *when we have not sinned*. After we have been tempted and we have won the day and stood fast, then he comes and says, "Now, that was well done on your part, you are a splendid saint." And he who thinks himself a splendid saint is next door to a shameful sinner, depend upon it. And Satan soon gets the advantage over him.

If you are successful in business or successful in holy work, then Satan will tempt you. If you are not successful and have had a bad time, then Satan will tempt you. When you have a heavy load to carry, he

will tempt you. When that load is taken off, then he will tempt you worse than ever. He will tempt you when you have obtained some blessing that you have been thinking was such a great boon, just as, in the wilderness, when they would cry for flesh and said that they must have flesh, God gave them their heart's desire—but sent leanness into their soul. Just as you have secured the thing that you are seeking, then comes a temptation—to which all I have to say is this—"Watch."

"What I say unto you, I say unto all," said Christ, "Watch. Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." And by the conflict and the victory of your Master, go into the conflict bravely and expect to conquer by faith in Him, even as He overcame.

But what shall I say to those who are the slaves and the friends of Satan? The Lord have mercy upon you! If you desire to escape, there is only one way. There is the cross and Christ does hang upon it. Look to Jesus. He can set you free. He came on purpose to proclaim liberty to the captives. Look and live. Look now, and live now. I implore you, do it, for His dear sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

LUKE 4:1-15

Verse 1. *And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,*

"Full of the Holy Ghost." And then led "into the wilderness" to be tempted. You would not expect that. Yet it is a sadder thing to be led into a wilderness when you are not filled with the Spirit, and a sadder thing to be tempted when the Spirit of God is not resting upon you. The temptation of our Lord was not one to which He wantonly exposed Himself. He "was led by the Spirit into the wilderness." The Spirit of God may lead us where we shall have to endure trial. If He does so, we are safe, and we shall come away conquerors even as our Master did.

2. *Being forty days tempted of the devil.*

Six weeks of temptation. We read the story of the temptation, perhaps, in six minutes, but it lasted for nearly six weeks. "Forty days tempted of the devil."

2. *And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.*

It does not appear, therefore, that Jesus hungered while He was fasting. He was miraculously sustained during that period. After fasting, one looks for deeper spiritual feeling and more holy joy. But the most prominent fact, here, is that, "He afterward hungered."

Think not that you have lost the benefit of your devout exercises when you do not at once feel it. Perhaps the very best thing that can happen to you, after much prayer, is a holy hunger. I mean not a natural hunger, as it was with our Lord, but a blessed hungering after divine things. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

3. *And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.*

Satan met the hungry Man and suited the temptation to His present pangs, to His special weakness at that moment—"If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread." The devil suspected and I think he knew that Jesus was the Son of God, but he began the temptation with an "if." He hissed into the Savior's ear—"If thou be the Son of God."

If you, believer, can be led to doubt your sonship and to fear that you are not a son of God, Satan will have begun to win the battle. So he begins to storm the royal fort of faith—"If thou be the Son of God." Our Lord was the Son of God, but He was then suffering as our Substitute—and in that condition He was a lone and humble man. What if I call Him, "a common soldier in the ranks"?

Satan invites Him to work a miracle of an improper kind on His own behalf, but Jesus wrought no miracle for Himself. Now, it may be that the devil is trying some of you tonight. You are very poor, or business is going very awkwardly, and Satan suggests that you should help yourself in an improper manner. He tells you that you can get out of your trouble very easily by some action which, although it

may not be strictly right, may not be so very wrong after all. He said to Jesus, “If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.”

4. *And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written,*

That is Christ’s sword. Look how swiftly He drew it out of its sheath. What a sharp two-edged sword is this to be used against Satan! You also, believer, have this powerful weapon in your hand—let no man take it from you. Believe in the inspiration of Scripture. Just now there is a fierce attack upon the Book of Deuteronomy. It is a very curious thing that all the texts Christ used during the temptation were taken out of Deuteronomy, as if that was to be the very armory out of which He would select this true Jerusalem blade with which He should overcome the tempter, “*It is written,*” “*It is written,*” “*It is said.*”

4. *That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.*

“God can sustain Me without My turning the stone into bread. God can bring Me through my trouble without My saying or doing anything wrong. I am not dependent upon the outward and visible.” If you can feel like that, if you can appropriate the promise of God, and quote it to Satan, saying, “It is written,” using it as Christ did, you will come off conqueror in the time of temptation even as He did.

5. *And the devil,*

Now he tries Him again. There is wave upon wave trying to wash the Son of man off His feet.

5. *Taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.*

Skeptics have asked how that could be done. Well, they had better ask him who did it. He knows more about them and they know more about him than I do. But he did it. I am sure, for here it is written, that he “shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.”

6. *And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.*

Does not he talk proudly in the presence of his Lord and Master? What an audacious dog he must have been to howl thus in the presence of Him who could have destroyed him by a look or a word, if He had wished to do so!

7-8. *If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan:*

The temptation annoyed Him—it was so foreign to His holy nature, it vexed His gracious spirit—so He cried out indignantly to the tempter, “Get thee behind me, Satan.”

8. *For it is written,*

Here flashed forth the sword again.

8. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*

Then let us pay no reverence, no worship to any but God. Consciences and minds are made for God alone—before Him let us bow—and if all the world were offered to us for a moment’s idolatry, let us not fall into the snare of the tempter.

9. *And he brought him to Jerusalem,*

Satan now takes Christ to holy ground. Temptations are generally more severe there.

9. *And set him on a pinnacle of the temple,*

The highest point of all. Elevated high above the earth.

9-11. *And said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence, for it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

Now Satan tries to quote Scripture, as he can do when it answers his purpose, but he never quotes it correctly. You young brothers who go out preaching, mind that you do not imitate the devil by quoting part of a text or quoting Scripture incorrectly. He did it, however, with a purpose—not by misadventure or from forgetfulness—he left out the very necessary words, “In all thy ways.” “He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.” Satan left out those last four words, for it was not the way of a child of God to come down from a pinnacle of the temple headlong into the gulf beneath.

12. *And Jesus answering, said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*

Do nothing presumptuously. Do nothing which would lead the Lord to act otherwise than according to His settled laws, which are always right and good.

13-14. *And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season. And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee:*

He had not lost anything by the temptation, “the power of the Spirit” was still upon Him.

14-15. *And there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.*

He became popular. The people resorted to Him and were glad to hear Him. He who has had secret temptation and private conflict is prepared to bear open success without being elevated by it. Have you stood foot to foot with Satan? You will think little of the applause or of the attacks of your fellow men.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—631, 716, 703

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